

Promoting Strong Parishes Through Intentional Discipleship

Our parishes are an active and vital part of the Catholic Church's ministry and are a great gift of God to help us share our faith.

As a center of our Christian life, our parishes are the place where we worship, where we hear God's Word, where we experience God's love, where we are nourished to live our mission in the world, where we find fellowship with our brothers and sisters in Christ, where we baptize and educate our children, where we see them grow closer to God through Eucharist, Penance, Confirmation and Matrimony, and where we seek consolation as we bury our beloved dead.

Despite difficult times, those who preceded us sacrificed to build the churches we enjoy today. Now it is our time to step forward to keep our parishes strong. Strong, vibrant parishes can be within our reach if parishioners are committed and intentional in their participation and support.



How Will This Effort Help?

Through this program we aim to invite parishioners to **imagine the potential that exists** if every parishioner could make a faith commitment to **be more active**, to **bring more of their talents** to bear, and to offer a **sustained level of proportional financial support**.

Consider how your commitments can impact our collaborative's mission by:

- Enhancing liturgy, sacraments, music, and pastoral care
- Expanding youth and adult faith formation offerings
- Growing evangelization efforts and fostering more vocations
- Securing and beautifying facilities and grounds
- Increasing community outreach and ministry efforts
- Strengthening parish staff

By changing the way we think about how the parishes operate and by committing more of ourselves to further this work, we can plan for a brighter future in our faith community.

What is Being Asked of us?

Maintaining strong and vibrant parishes requires the commitment of each parishioner. During this initiative we should all examine how truly fortunate we are as members of God's family. In response and in gratitude we are asked to make commitments representing our 'return' to God.

Through the Grateful Discipleship Program, parishioners are asked to make three prayerful commitments for the year:

How much **TIME** will I give to worshipping Jesus Christ and to celebrating the Sacraments?

How much of my **TALENT** will I commit to furthering the work of God's Kingdom in my community and in the world?

How much of my **TREASURE** will I give in proportion to my means?

Christ's Teachings on Giving

Jesus preached about being a good steward, and the Bible interprets stewardship as giving back to God the first fruits of our labors: ***Everything we have is a gift from God and we are asked to return a portion of those gifts in gratitude for all we have.*** Today, let us begin an examination of our personal blessings.

"Becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ leads naturally to the practice of stewardship. These linked realities, discipleship and stewardship, then make up the fabric of a Christian life in which each day is lived in an intimate, personal relationship with the Lord"

- U.S. Bishops' Pastoral Letter on Stewardship

"What return shall I make to the Lord for all He has given to me?"
- Psalm 116:12

How this Program will benefit the Catholic Parishes of Stoughton

"God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life" (Jn 3:16). For those of us who are baptized into Christ Jesus, this Gospel is both a comfort and a commission. It is indeed the consoling truth and grace of human life: we are created by God to live with Him forever in the communion of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. At the same time, this truth is the Good News that Christ commanded His disciples to announce to the whole world. By her nature, then, the Church is a divine communion formed by and in Christ for the missionary work of evangelization, the work of bringing the Gospel of Christ to all peoples.

Though we have accomplished much in recent years, our declining attendance at Mass and other activities has limited our ability to be a truly apostolic church. Intentional discipleship is the key to growing our parishes and making us vibrant. **This Grateful Discipleship Program will permit our parishes of St. James and Immaculate Conception to take major leaps forward as we continue to prepare our ministries, programs, and facilities for service to future generations.**

As St. Peter exhorts each of us in his epistle, "As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another..." (1 Peter 4:10). Please consider how your proportionate giving and prudent use of His blessings will permit our parish to tackle the needs below:

- Increase participation in Mass, Adoration, Prayer Groups, Book Club and Bible Study
- Grow the number of volunteers who are critical to our ministries
- Enable the parish to accurately forecast and plan for the coming year through pledged giving

To meet these goals, we look to each of our parishioners to prayerfully consider their commitment to the parish for the coming year. As we look at the benefits, which will be returned to thousands, let us remember that working together we can proclaim God's message with joy and hope!



John's Gospel recounts Jesus' words,

"I came so that they might have life, and have it more abundantly" (Jn 10:10)

Our love for every person makes us want to extend this invitation on Christ's behalf. A strong parish – able to truly evangelize, form disciples, and grow – is more necessary today than ever before.

We understand that not all will be able to commit at this time. We hope those of you who can do so will increase your levels of participation and support - a prayerfully considered commitment to give back in appreciation for the gifts you have received from God.

We make these requests in the expectation that such commitments by each of us will have an immediate and important impact on the vitality of our parishes.

Thank You

*Fr. Carlos D. Suarez – Pastor
and the clergy and staff of the
Catholic Parishes of Stoughton*

The Catholic Parishes of Stoughton

**St. James
Immaculate Conception**

**Grateful Discipleship
is the way to cultivate
J.O.Y**

J – Jesus

O – Others

Y – You

